

CASTLEMAINE NATURALIST

12

Pres: Mr R. Bradfield.
Sec : Mrs R. Mills
Treas: Mr L. Bransgrove.

APRIL 77

Grevillea alpina (GS) Monthly meetings are held on the second Friday of each month (third Friday in April), at the Castlemaine Education Centre (SEC Building, Mostyn St) at 8 p.m. Visitors and prospective members are invited to attend the club's sessions.

Orchids of the Castlemaine District Number 7

HORNED ORCHID (*Orthoceras strictum*) by R. Mills

This monotypic orchid prefers fairly swampy soil, but can be found in this district in the Muckleford bush near the Maldon railway line.

There are two varieties. One is green; the other is more brownish purple in colour and is the one found here.

The flowers turn in towards the stem and are spirally placed up the stem. It is self pollinating. Although 20-40 cm high it is very difficult to spot because of its coloring.

The common and the generic name both refer to the long straight lateral sepals which resemble horns.

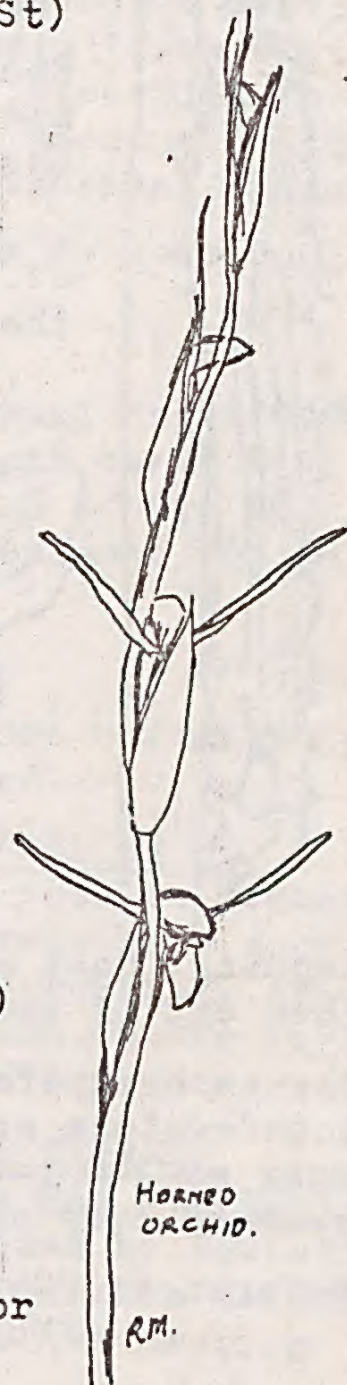
From "Mt Alexander Mail" April 1861 (R. Bradfield)

Mr R. Gravenor has purchased 3,000 rabbits from Barwon Park Estate. It is stated that rabbit coursing will be put on at the rear of the Bath Arms (Campbells Creek) by Mr Stephens.

SOME UNUSUAL SPECIMENS OF MUSKY CALADENIA by Mr

Some unusual specimens of *Caladenia angustata* are F. Taylor

- (a) Nine flowers on the stem - Mc enzies Hill
- (b) Colour deep pink, labellum and column shading to pale pink at the tips of the petals - Glenluce.
- (c) Many variations of colour and growth- Woodbrook.



HORNED
ORCHID.

R.M.

ARMY WORMS AND THUNDERSTORMS

Actually caterpillars, they are called armyworms because they move in long columns.

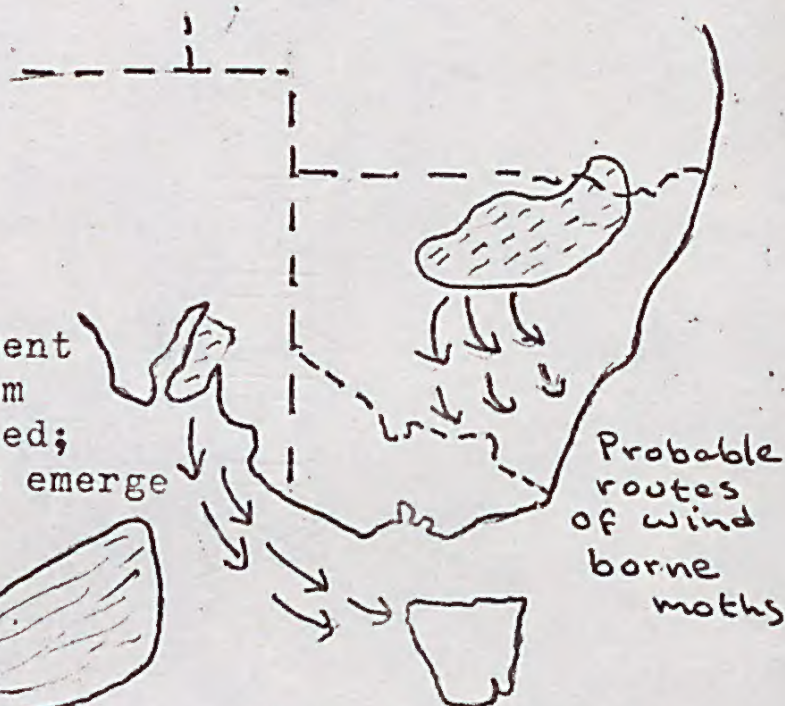
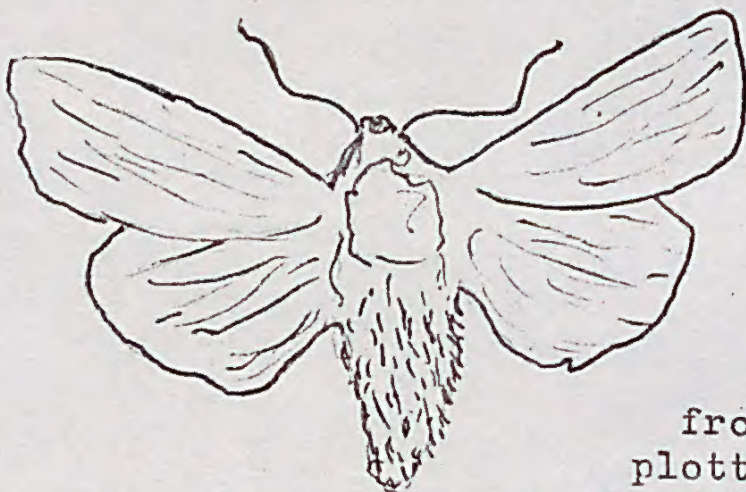
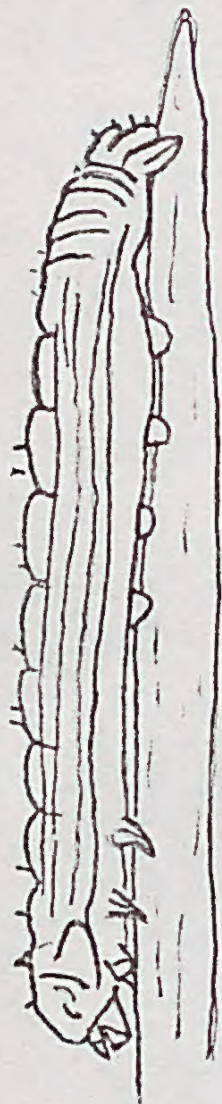
The army moves until it reaches suitable food (e.g. an oat crop). In late afternoon the caterpillars crawl up the stems and begin feeding. They can actually be heard chomping through the night. Next morning they drop off the plants, after having reduced the oat crop by up to 7 bags/hectare. Next evening they begin again.

Their sudden appearance in large numbers has long been a mystery.

Various theories had been put forward - some farmers blamed thunderstorms, saying that thunderstorms caused the eggs to hatch.

Research by CSIRO has now solved part of the mystery.

In some areas, development of the caterpillars from the eggs can be predicted; the caterpillars emerge



after a sufficient number of warm days.

However, some infestations are wind borne from warmer areas. Radar plotting shows that the moths are blown long distances without

landing. Most are presumably lost at sea. A storm literally drops them out of the sky, causing isolated pockets of army worm outbreaks

One such skydrop occurred in the Mitta Valley, near Albury. A thunderstorm preceded an army worm outbreak which resulted in as many as 140 per square meter. They attacked rye grass pastures and swarmed over and through buildings and houses.

Reference: "Counter Offensive Against Army Worms; Rural Research; No 93, Dec 1976 (CSIRO)

Newsletter Editor: E. Perkins.

CLUB PROGRAM

April Meeting Friday April 15

This is the third Friday.

Speaker: Mr R. Bradfield

Subject: Aborigines of the
Castlemaine District.

May Meeting Friday May 13

Members night.

Members are asked to contribute
items if possible.

June Meeting Friday June 10

Speaker: Mr B. Singleton

Subject: Japanese Gardens

July Meeting Friday July 8

Speaker: Mr E. Wilkinson

Subject: Geology

Special May Meeting Tues May 17

Joint meeting with Camera Club.

Program: The camera club will
be showing PHOTOFLORA 76, a
selection of nature slides.
Sections are: Victoria Wild-
flowers; Australian Wildflowers;
In the Bush with a Camera; Birds;
Orchids.

FROM THE COMMITTEE MEETING

MEETING TIMES Excursions begin no
later than 5 minutes after the
stated time; an effort will be
made to begin meetings in a
similar fashion.

LODDON CAMPASPE SURVEY

The sub-committee has met.

Information about significant
or unusual natural history feat-
ures of the district would be
welcomed. Further information
will be given later on.

SUBSCRIPTION

Single: \$3 Family: \$5

Student/Junior: \$1

COMMITTEE MEETS Thurs April 28
in Education Centre at 8 p.m.

EXCURSIONS

Sunday April 17 Vaughan District

Time: 10.00 a.m. and Education

Centre or 10.20 at Vaugan Springs
car park. There will be a 6 km
walk. Bring a cut lunch.

Leader: Mr Bradfield.

Saturday May 21 Mt Tarrengower.

Leave Ed. Centre at 1.00.

Saturday June 11 Koala Park

Leave Ed Centre at 1.00.

Excursions being planned by the
Committee include Ocean Grove,
Bus trip to Rheola (with Hist-
orical Society), Strathlea forest,
Gisborne animal sanctuary and
Pyrete Range, Grampians Campout.

Suggestions from members would
be welcomed.

TREASURER

A/c Printing Annual Mag: \$29.88,
Printing of record cards \$32,
Affiliation F.N.C of Vic \$8,
Petty cash, \$5; balance \$61.54

NAME TAGS

A quantity of name cards and pins
will be purchased.

CASTLEMAINE NATURALIST

The magazine is free to members,
schools etc. Obtain your copy
from the monthly meeting, or
from the Education Centre foyer,
or from the Castlemaine Market.

EDUCATION CENTRE LIBRARY

Nature books are now available
and may be borrowed by Education
Centre members. Further details
will be given at the meeting

BIRD OBSERVER CLUB EXCURSION

The BOC will conduct an excursion
to Castlemaine on 23 April

PROPAGATION OF NATIVE PLANTS

A summary of an address given by Mr G. Sitch to CFNC on 12 Feb, 1977.

Why Propagate?

Many native plants are relatively unknown and in danger of extinction; one of the best ways of preserving them is to grow them in our gardens. It's a sure way too of getting a desirable garden plant, and it is cheaper, particularly if you want a massed display. Massed displays are often more attractive than a single specimen, and plants usually grow better this way.

Seed Collection

There are seed banks but it is best to collect your own -we have a wealth of excellent garden plants in the Castlemaine bush.

There are two kinds of seed plants:-

(a) Plants which disperse their seed as soon as it is ripe, (e.g. wattles, bush-peas, and grevilleas). You need to know when to collect. For local wattles, the week between Christmas and the New Year is usually best. For later flowering kinds the seed is usually ready a fortnight after this. The seeds are ready when the cases become woody. It is possible to tie muslin or stocking bags over the seed cases.

(b) Plants that retain the seeds for many years, the seeds not ripening until picked, (e.g. eucalypts, bottlebrushes and banksias). Pick the oldest capsules that you can see, place them in a paper bag and put them in a warm place.

Plant the seeds as soon as possible- the fresher the seed the better the germination.

Pre-treatment of Seeds

Pre-treatment will hasten the germination of some seeds (e.g. peas and wattles). One way is to place the seed in a tumbler and pour boiling water over the seed. Label first! After a while the seed coat takes in water and swells up; it is then ready to plant. Other ways include nicking with a razor blade on the blunt end and rubbing the seed between blocks of sand paper.

Soil Mix for Seeds

Good drainage is essential. A sand/peat moss mixture is used. Use sand from granite creeks. It should be washed and sieved through an 1/8 inch sieve. Sieve the peat-moss also.

Germinating the seed.

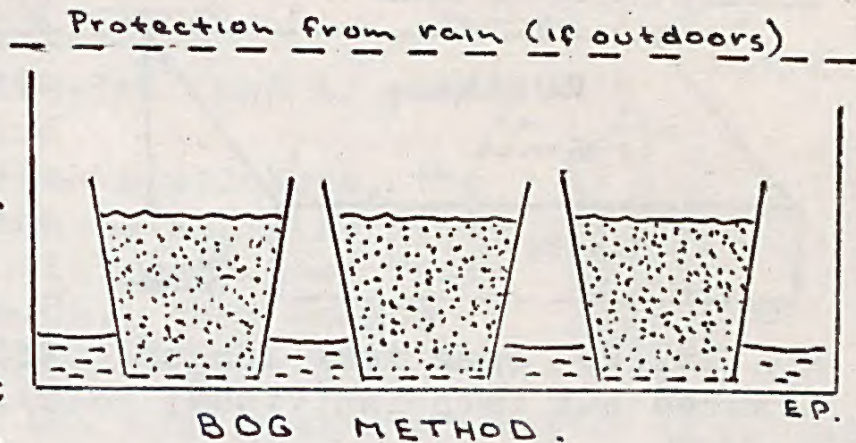
Ice-cream or margarine containers can be used as pots. Holes for drainage can be made with a hot soldering iron (Good ventilation for this is essential- the fumes are poisonous). 2½ inch plastic tubes are ideal for small quantities of seed.

For very fine seed, the bog method can be used- this avoids the

need to water with resulting splashing of seed. To prevent splashing by rain, cover with glass or plastic.

Results are quick. Once germination occurs, lower the water level, and take out of the water when leaves form.

For larger seed, cover them with fine sand to a depth about equal to the size of the seeds.



Transplant as soon as the first leaves form. Plant out into milk cartons, drink cans etc. Good drainage is needed- put holes in the containers and put gravel at the base of the pots.

Potting Soil

Equal parts of good garden soil, leaf mould and coarse sand is a suitable mix; a disadvantage is that it contains weed seed.

An alternative is to use equal parts of coarse sawdust and sand. Weathered sawdust is best, or water the sawdust with a weak urea solution. Fertiliser can be supplied by Osmocote, Nitrophoska or Magamp. Add 4 oz per $1/8$ c. yard (1 g per litre) of potting mix.

Cuttings.

An advantage of propagation by cuttings is that the new plants are true to type. Cutting material should be springy, neither too soft (rots easily) or too woody. Keep the sprays in a plastic bag until cuttings are made. Use a pair of good sharp secateurs to make a cut about $1/8$ inch (2-3 mm) below the leaf join. Cut the leaves off $2/3$ of the length of the cutting. The lower leaves must be completely removed or they will rot. If the leaves are large, trim the top leaves.

Alternatively, tear off a side shoot, and trim as before.

Very small leaves can sometimes be stripped by hand

Cutting Soil

Use washed coarse sand. The addition of some peat moss is optional. The mix should be passed through an $1/8$ inch sieve. Fertiliser could be detrimental.

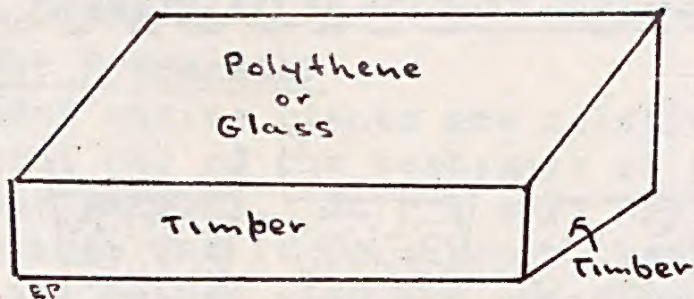
Pots can be of almost any material

Hormones

There is a difference of opinion about the value of rooting hormones. The best time to take cuttings is after flowering when the plants are producing their own hormones.



Propagating frames



It is easy to make a simple cold frame. Some circulation of air is needed to prevent too much heat build up. In summer, paint the glass with white paint or keep it in the shade. Water once a day (twice a day in hot weather).

Most plants will strike within two months, but some take longer. (After roots form the cuttings are planted out into individual pots).

References

Propagation of Native Plants - Kings Park, W.A.
 Western Australian Plants in Cultivation, A.R. Fairall. (Permagon Press)
 Growing Australian Native Plants, F.J.C. Rogers. (Nelson)
 Growing More Native Plants, F.J.C. Rogers, (Nelson)

Jack Wheeler's Book in Use A report by Merrilyn Mills

FEEDING A TAWNY FROGMOUTH

A little while ago we were looking after an injured frogmouth that a friend had brought to us. The tawny frogmouth is often thought to be a species of owl but is actually no relation.

We kept it in the lounge room and fed it on small pieces of meat dipped in glucoden as recommended in Jack Wheeler's book, and we also tried it on moths, but we are not sure whether he ate the moths or not. Mum thinks that he was blind in one eye as his pupils seemed to be odd sizes. He didn't respond when something was waved in front of the eye in which the pupil didn't change.

When Mum picked him up he let out a terrific squawk, rather like a cockatoo. His feathers were soft and he looked like a dead bit of wood.

We tried to let him go once, but next morning we found him beneath the tree he had been sitting in. So we put him in a cage for the day. We let him out in the evening with some food, which he ate. We have not seen him since.

FROM MARYBOROUGH FNC 25th BIRTHDAY ADDRESS (by Geoff Williams)

" We seem to be fond of doing battle on many fronts, for we have opposed the destruction of whales and wombats; the grazing of forest lands; the indiscriminate use of 1080 poison and various pesticides; the 'Concorde' in Australia; control burning in low rainfall areas; the planting of pines in the Wombat Forest; the opening up of the Little Desert and the Pyrenees Ranges for agriculture: the waste of resources in unnecessary packaging; the killing of roadside trees by government bodies and landowners; and the slaughter of protected birds during the duck season. The battle has not yet been won on any of these fronts....."

Plants of the Castlemaine District

THE COMMON MISTLETOES

Number 7 of a series.

(*Amyema miquelii* and *A. pendulum*)

Two uncommon mistletoes, the grey mistletoe and wiry mistletoe have already been featured. The two more common mistletoes are described here.

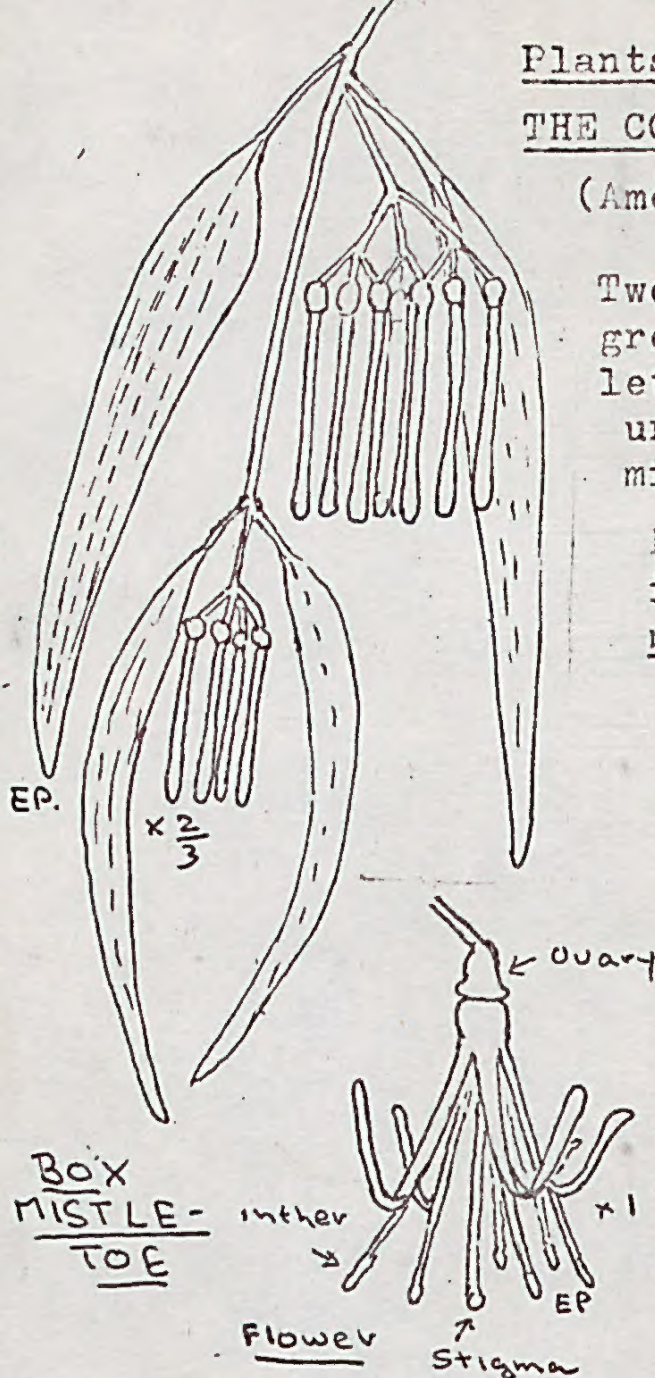


Easily the most common mistletoe in the district is the box mistletoe (*Amyema miquelii*). Its name suggests where to look- on the box eucalypts and related trees (e.g the yellow gum).

The drooping mistletoe (*A. pendulum*) is very similar in appearance, but is much less common in this district. I have been able to find only a single specimen of it in Kalimna Park (in a gully near the golf course).

Surprisingly however, it is very common about a kilometre downstream from the Expedition Pass Reservoir. According to Willis, it is the most common of the Victorian mistletoes.

The table gives some of the obvious differences between the two



Box Mistletoe

Drooping Mistletoe

Flowers late summer-early autumn

Flowers in spring

Flowers and buds in groups of 3 or 4, not in line (like legs of a tripod)

Flowers and buds in threes arranged in line (like 3 cricket stumps)

All flowers and buds on stalks

Central flower or bud stalkless

The most common host tree is the eucalypt, and like most mistletoes the leaves are very similar in appearance to those of the host. The reason for this is not clear. It may be that the camouflage helps confuse the predators of the mistletoe.

The name *Amyema* refers to a district in Chad; this name was given by the French botanist Van Tieghem to some African species.

Book Review

CORREA by GEOFF SITCH and AUSTRALIAN PLANT STUDY GROUP

Geoff Sitch's new book "Correa" has now been published. The edition is limited to 1000 copies and each is signed by the author. It contains drawings, descriptions and cultivation notes for each of the correas. As would be expected, the drawings are of Geoff's usual high standard.

Such works, dealing in detail with all of the species in particular genera have long been needed. I hope that others will follow.

This is an invaluable book for native plant growers and for those interested in our native plants. Price is \$1

E.P.

THE LEADEN FLYCATCHER A NEW BIRD FOR KALIMNA PARK

Ray Wallace reports that he has sighted the Leaden Flycatcher in Kalimna Park. As far as is known, this is the first record for Kalimna. The Leaden Flycatcher is similar to the Willie Wagtail in appearance, but is leaden grey and white, not black and white.

The current bird list for Kalimna Park is given.

White-faced heron	Olive-backed oriole	Restless flycatcher
White ibis	Mudlark	Golden whistler
Straw-necked ibis +	White-winged chough	Rufous whistler
Royal spoonbill	White-backed magpie	Starling
Black-shouldered kite	Grey Currawong	Yellow-faced honeyeater
Australian goshawk +	Pied currawong +	Eastern Spinebill +
Wedgetailed eagle	White-throated tree-	Noisy miner
Spurwinged plover	creeper.	Red wattlebird
Bronzewinged pigeon	Orange-winged sittell	Eastern shriketit
Galah	White-browed babbler ^a	Yellow-tipped pardalote
Crimson rosella	Blackbird	Silver-eye
Eastern Rosella	Grey thrush	House sparrow
Pallid cuckoo	Yellow-tailed thorn-	Goldfinch
Tawny frogmouth	Brown thornbill(bill	Red-browed finch
Sacred kingfisher	Blue wren	Mistletoe bird
Kookaburra	Scarlet robin	White-naped honeyeater
Welcome swallow	Grey fantail	Spotted pardalote
Black-faced cuckoo-	Willie wagtail	Hooded robin
Raven (shrike	Leaden flycatcher #	Painted quail +

(Source: Kalimna Park Preservation Committee bird list; + E. Perkins, # R. Wallace)

Additions to the bird list would be welcomed. Also confirmation of the presence of the listed birds is asked for.

A bird list for Kaweka sanctuary is being prepared; contributions to this list would be appreciated.